DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 560 PS 027 778

TITLE	Employer Child Care Resources: A Guide to Developing Effective Child Care Programs and Policies.
INSTITUTION	Women's Bureau (DOL), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	23p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Day Care; Early Childhood Education; *Employer Supported Day Care; *Fringe Benefits; Guidelines; Program Design; Program Effectiveness; Program Guides; Working Hours
IDENTIFIERS	Child Care Needs

ABSTRACT

Increasing numbers of employers are responding to employee child care needs by revising their benefit packages, work schedules, and recruitment plans to include child care options. This guide details ways to develop effective child care programs and policies. Section 1 of the guide describes employees' growing child care needs and employers' benefits from child care. Section 2 presents steps an employer should take in deciding whether to implement a child care program or policy, including a careful investigation of employees' child care needs and preferences and the employer's goals and resources, as well as an awareness of the supply of and demand for child care services in the community. Section 3 offers detailed descriptions, including advantages and disadvantages, of a range of child care options falling under the categories of direct services, information services, educational services, alternative work schedules, and flexible benefits. Section 4 identifies federal agencies involved in or knowledgeable about child care initiatives. (KB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 431 560

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PS

Employer Child Care Resources:

A Guide to Developing Effective Child Care Programs and Policies

PS 027278

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau

"In this new economy, we have to think of family friendly policies in a new way. Not as fringe benefits. Not as perks. But for what they really are — good ideas that are good for workers and good for business. Make no mistake. Companies succeed in the global marketplace when workers succeed around the kitchen table."

Remarks by Labor Secretary Alexis M. Herman
at a White House child care event on
"Take Our Daughters to Work Day"

April 23, 1998

I. Introduction

Employee Child Care Needs

Child care is more important than ever in today's business world. Over the past several decades, millions of parents entered our nation's labor force and changed family life in very fundamental ways. The number of working mothers has increased dramatically over the past twenty years.

In March 1998, 65 percent of mothers with children under age 6 were labor-force participants, compared to 40.9 percent 20 years earlier. And more than 60 percent of mothers with children under age 3 were in the labor force, up from 35.1 percent two decades earlier.

We can only expect this trend to continue as more working parents juggle their work and home responsibilities. Research shows many working parents sometimes have trouble finding reliable child care, which often poses job problems. For example:

- More than four in ten parents surveyed by Global Strategy Group for the YMCA in 1998 said their ability to find reliable child care has either frequently (30 percent) or occasionally (20 percent) affected their job or business.
- A 1997 Families and Work Institute study found that one in four employed parents with children under age 13 experienced a problem with their usual child care arrangements in the previous three months.

Employer Benefits from Child Care

Many employers recognize that workers cannot perform their best when they are worried about the care of their children. Many know an investment in child care is not just a nice thing to do — it makes good business sense. It is a decision that helps them recruit from a much larger talent pool; retain committed and motivated workers; and be more creative and productive. Employers find that effective child care programs can be critical to their success.

According to a 1995 Conference Board survey, many companies benefited substantially by offering child care services. For example, 62 percent of employee respondents reported higher morale; 54 percent reported reduced absenteeism; 52 percent reported increased productivity; and 37 percent reported lower turnover.

Large, medium-sized and small businesses shared similar findings with the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau.

- DuPont Company, the major Delaware-based corporation, learned from an employee survey that 80 percent would have missed work if not for its emergency/back-up care program.

- When Trout-Blue Chelan, a small Central Washington apple-picking cooperative opened an on-site child care center, it increased recruitment and worker retention.

Most employers are fully committed to child care and their experiences prove that effective child care programs are well worth the cost of implementation. In 1998, the Treasury Department commissioned a survey of 1,109 companies by the Families and Work Institute on the cost-effectiveness of work/family programs. More than two-thirds of responding employers said the benefits from child care programs are greater than the costs or cost neutral.

An increasing number of employers are responding to employee child care needs by revising their benefit packages, work schedules and recruitment plans to include child care options such as on-site child care centers, resource and referral services, flexiplace/telecommuting, alternative work schedules, and flexible spending accounts.

Information Provided in the Following Sections of Employer Child Care Resources

Section II of this resource guide, **Key Steps to Establishing Child Care Programs**, lays out steps an employer should take in deciding whether to implement a child care program or policy, including:

- ❒ Careful investigation of employees' child care needs and preferences and the employer's goals and resources
- ❒ Awareness of the supply of and demand for child care services in the community

Section III, **Selecting the Best Child Care Options**, offers detailed descriptions — including advantages and disadvantages — of a range of child care options falling under the categories of Direct Services, Information Services, Educational Services, Alternative Work Schedules, and Flexible Benefits.

Section IV, **Reference Listing**, identifies federal agencies involved in or knowledgeable about child care initiatives.

II. Key Steps to Establishing Child Care Programs

Employees' Child Care Needs and Preferences

Designing a child care program or policy to fit the unique features of a given organization requires time and a careful assessment of employee needs. These needs may be difficult to determine if employees fear repercussions for sharing problems associated with their family responsibilities. Employers should allay workers' anxieties about the intent of any data-gathering process. They also should recognize that employees may not request help because they may be unaware of the forms of assistance their employer can offer.

A good needs assessment will determine:

- ❒ what kinds of child care needs employees have
- ❒ which groups of employees have the most needs
- ❒ what impact these needs have on work
- ❒ what types of child care programs or policies would address employees' needs most effectively

Detailed information about employees' current child care arrangements and how well they work best predicts the success of a proposed program. Gathering such data is more effective than simply asking working parents whether they would anticipate using a nonexistent program that the employer might install, but with which they have had no experience.

Data Collection Methods

Federal Government Sources — The U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics has information on workforce data and trends. The U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census has data on family demographics. Another Federal source is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the Social Security Administration, the Child Care Bureau and other departmental agencies concerned with the health and welfare of families. Copies of many government publications are available for free.

State/Community Organizations — State agencies have demographic information useful for projecting needs within a particular employee population. Organizations in the community may be good data sources as well. Companies can use data such as average family income, cost of raising a family, and the birth rate to assess the ability of the local population to pay for needed services and project demands for services.

Employee Surveys — Most companies find an employee survey to be the most accurate or complete method for collecting data. An employer can survey all employees or conduct a random sample. Large firms may conduct a formal survey; small employers may talk informally with staff. Surveys are conducted by an outside consultant or in collaboration with a union or community agency.

Focus groups — Focus groups, or small discussion groups, are an alternative data-gathering method that small companies often find more cost effective. They also can be an adjunct to a survey. Focus group participants may be selected from each of the important segments of the employee population to ensure that key groups of workers are represented. The information they provide is, however, less quantitative than survey data. Focus groups typically convene 8 to 15 people for one- to two-hour discussions led by a trained focus group leader.

Internal Sources — As an alternative to surveys or focus groups, employers with child care referral services in place can use their records to determine the types of child care programs or policies that employees have sought and their success in securing them.

Who to Involve in the Process

Supervisors — Some companies involve supervisors in the decision-making process through interviews or separate surveys, recognizing they are the most likely to know of employee problems. Their involvement also might prevent later problems in the implementation of programs.

Child Care Advisors — Many companies have found that the use of a child care advisor or consultant in the needs assessment stage increases the chances of obtaining an accurate picture.

Unions — An employer with a unionized workforce may decide to involve the union in some or all phases of the process, from information gathering and needs assessment to decision making and implementation. Another employer may find that collective bargaining is a more effective route for addressing work and family needs.

Focus of Needs Assessment

A thorough needs assessment should consider the arrangements employees currently use for child care; how well these arrangements work; and the extent to which various kinds of child care problems interfere with work. It typically includes questions to determine the following:

- ❒ With what aspect of child care do parents have the greatest problem?
- ❒ Are there particular problems with care for their infants, preschoolers or school-aged children?
- ❒ Are there particular problems with regular child care, care for ill children or care in emergency situations?

The assessment should differentiate among various degrees of child care difficulties. In addition, it should allow workers to describe separately their needs and preferences for different age groups of children. Two factors are key in the needs assessment process — a high response rate and a level of confidentiality that will encourage employees to respond accurately and with candor.

Communication with employees prior to the assessment is recommended to help workers understand the survey questions, increase the response rate, and convey the importance of the assessment. It can also prevent employees from developing false or unrealistic expectations about assessment follow-up action.

Employers' Goals and Resources

Any organization considering establishing a child care program should define its goals clearly and consider them carefully. Is the company seeking to increase productivity? Has absenteeism or excessive job turnover been a problem? If the goal is to lessen or alleviate these problems, then some form of child care assistance may be a solution. Different child care strategies have varying effects on absenteeism, turnover, recruitment, and other productivity-related factors.

In addition to goals, an employer needs to consider the availability of resources for establishing a child care initiative. This could help determine the viability of instituting a financial assistance program, opening a child care center, contracting with a community child care group for services or considering another option.

Employers also should recognize that child care initiatives have different capacities for solving employees' child care problems and require varying degrees of administrative involvement. Some are employee services; others become part of the benefits package.

Community Child Care Resources

An examination of community resources identifies existing gaps and helps to avoid unnecessary duplication of services already available. A look at community resources may reveal more accurately whether problems relate to accessibility or availability and will help companies decide the most useful response.

Contact with the community also identifies experts who can help align the company with the best talent and the most efficient strategies for implementing the firm's response to family needs. These experts can become a link to information about other corporate or government initiatives. Companies may want to identify the major child care programs their employees are using. Visits to these providers can help define standards of quality and prevailing fees.

Liability often becomes a concern at this stage of the investigation and must be addressed, especially by employers considering a child care center. Other requirements/regulations may be identified by a review of local, State and Federal policies.

Sources of community information include:

- ❒ Prominent service providers of child care; resource and referral agencies
- ❒ United Way agencies
- ❒ Chambers of Commerce
- ❒ Mayor's offices
- ❒ State licensing agencies
- ❒ College/university departments of child development, social work or business
- ❒ Professional associations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- ❒ Civic groups such as the Junior League, Kiwanis, YWCA and American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- ❒ County and city departments of family services or human resources
- ❒ State, city and county commissions on the status of women

III. Selecting the Best Child Care Options

Employers should select their child care option(s) based on their capacity to address employee needs and fit the organization's goals and resources. The best solutions will solve child care problems for enough employees to have the desired impact on management goals such as absenteeism and recruitment. A multifaceted approach might be required to address the different types of difficulties experienced by the workforce.

A pilot project approach, whereby a company implements a particular child care option while measuring its effect on need and productivity, can serve as a long-range planning tool. The company can use its own experience to modify features of the program or add additional services. The ultimate goal is to offer a comprehensive child care program that addresses child care needs, while operating it as cost effectively as possible. This will bring the maximum value to the company.

Child care options fall under a number of categories: Direct Services, Information Services, Educational Services, Alternative Work Schedules, and Flexible Benefits. The following section provides descriptions of programs in each of these categories, along with their advantages and disadvantages.

Direct Services

On-site/Off-site Child Care Center

Sponsored by an employer or union at the worksite or another location, the center is operated by the employer or by a nonprofit or for-profit child care provider. Many companies subsidize the cost so that all employees can afford the program. Two ways to do this are through vouchers and discounts.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Type, size and location of facility strongly affect costs and effectiveness
- ❒ Extent of quality control desired and how this relates to liability

Advantages

- ❒ Enhances the recruitment and retention of employees
- ❒ Reduces absenteeism and improves employee morale
- ❒ Provides favorable public relations for the company

Disadvantages

- ❒ Start-up is often expensive, and ongoing monitoring and financial support is necessary to ensure quality and affordability
- ❒ Use is often limited by space constraints and commuting patterns
- ❒ Not always accessible to all employees, particularly those working for multi-site companies

Consortium Center

Groups of employers share the costs and benefits of establishing and operating a child care center.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Amount of employer control over the child care program has implications for corporate liability
- ❒ Type, size and location of facility strongly affect costs and effectiveness
- ❒ Operating losses are not unusual at the beginning due to under-enrollment
- ❒ Employers often receive tax advantages
- ❒ Ongoing subsidy may be necessary to ensure that fees remain affordable for all employees
- ❒ It is often best to have a neutral coordinator of this effort

Advantages

- ❒ Resources, liability and costs are shared
- ❒ Small employers can participate
- ❒ Size of the combined labor force protects the center from long-term under-enrollment

Disadvantages

- ❒ May involve complicated negotiations among firms
- ❒ Center may be able to serve only a limited number of employees from each participating firm, thus diluting the management value
- ❒ Recruitment/public relations value is reduced

Public/Private Partnerships

Private industry and public agencies work together to address the child care needs in communities.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Can increase the supply of child care services and influence the quality of services
- ❒ A variety of organizations can work together to enhance the entire community's resources
- ❒ Program design is specifically tailored to existing needs in the community
- ❒ Combining expertise and resources of various groups is more productive

Advantages

- ❒ More cost effective for an employer, since funding is shared by more than one organization
- ❒ Existing child care resources can be expanded or their capacity adjusted to meet community demand
- ❒ Can serve company employees as well as other community members
- ❒ The company's image within the community is enhanced
- ❒ Can improve productivity by alleviating parental concerns about the qualifications and training of their children's caregivers

Disadvantages

- ❒ Requires extensive collaboration and cooperation from diverse groups
- ❒ Requires firm commitment from all partners

Sick Child Care Program

Provides care for children who are mildly ill or recovering from a health problem. Care can be provided in the "sick bay" of a child care center (in some States), in a hospital or clinic, or through in-home services such as visiting nurses.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Licensing restrictions may preclude employers from providing sick child care services in many States
- ❒ Sick children are the single greatest child care related cause of absenteeism among employees
- ❒ Cost will vary depending on the type of staff hired, insurance coverage and geographic location
- ❒ Overhead/on-going costs may be high, requiring a subsidy

Advantages

- ❒ Improves recruitment, morale and workflow; reduces absenteeism; relieves stress on parents
- ❒ Enhances company image

Disadvantages

- ❒ Monitoring quality control may be difficult in a visiting nurse program
- ❒ Caregiver/surroundings may be unfamiliar to the child
- ❒ Recruiting/retaining qualified staff may be difficult
- ❒ Usage may be low due to unfamiliarity with the concept

Emergency Child Care Program

Offers care for employees' children when regular arrangements fall through, when needed for holiday or weekend work or when schools are closed on snow days.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ For on-site service, the likely number of children requiring this type of care, available space and possible licensing requirements
- ❒ Liability coverage may be included in the company's existing insurance policy
- ❒ The cost will vary depending on whether the program is on-site or off-site, its size, the type of facility, and the amount of insurance coverage
- ❒ Travel care — company reimbursement for child care costs incurred by work-related travel

Advantages

- ❒ Cost effective for highly compensated employees
- ❒ Enhances company image
- ❒ Improves morale and reduces stress on parents; contributes to lower absenteeism and higher productivity

Disadvantages

- ❒ For on-site care, space may be too limited to effectively provide emergency care; for off-site care, it may be difficult to identify local providers who will take drop-in children
- ❒ Parents may abuse program's "emergency" purpose
- ❒ Sporadic use may make the program relatively expensive; there also may be liability risks

Family Day Care Network

A network of individual family day care home providers (people who care for children in their homes) connected through a child care center, agency or association. The network provides support services, such as training, equipment lending libraries and licensing assistance.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Networks are less expensive to start up than on-site or consortium centers; on-going financial support is generally advisable
- ❒ State and local licensing rules govern program size; a home typically serves six children
- ❒ Family day care homes are one of the most common forms of child care used
- ❒ Quality is closely related to the networks' support services

Advantages

- ❒ Children can be cared for close to where they live
- ❒ Family day care homes are often more conducive to caring for infants and school-age children
- ❒ Networks stimulate the supply of home providers

Disadvantages

- ❒ Much coordination and support are needed
- ❒ Home care providers may be difficult to recruit
- ❒ Quality control is difficult to ensure
- ❒ Insurance is costly and may be difficult to obtain
- ❒ Structure of the network may raise tax questions

School-Age Child Care

Provides care for children, ages 5-14, before and after school, during school holidays, on weekends, and/or during the summer. Employers either develop their own programs on-site or support programs in public schools, community centers or other agencies. "Warmlines," a telephone service, is another method for assisting "latchkey" children. This service provides a number the child may call when home alone, either before or after school, to speak with a supportive adult.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Availability of organizations and/or sites for the development of such programs
- ❒ Contracting with a local community agency may minimize costs to the employer
- ❒ Geographic dispersion of employees' children
- ❒ Whether it is cost effective to lease summer camp space only for the summer months and whether there is enough demand on weekends and/or holidays to justify keeping the space year round
- ❒ Public parks and pools for sports and recreation are often used to provide summer activities for employees' children, but think about the issue of liability

Advantages

- ❒ Addresses one of the most critical child care shortages
- ❒ Provides comfort to children and reduces their anxiety
- ❒ Can be cost effective for the employer if able to work through a local community agency
- ❒ Enhances company image; can be a recruitment tool
- ❒ Improves morale and reduces stress on parents; contributes to lower absenteeism and higher productivity

Disadvantages

- ❒ Requires transportation if the programs are not housed at schools
- ❒ Programs for older children may be hard to develop, since these children sometimes feel they are too old for child care

Non-Standard Hour Care

Provides care during early mornings, evenings, nights, and weekends. Care can be provided through an on-site center, consortium center or a community partnership.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by needs assessment
- ❒ Type, size and location of facility strongly affect costs and effectiveness
- ❒ Availability of organizations that provide non-standard hour care
- ❒ Employees who need non-standard hour care tend to be low wage workers who probably require subsidies to pay for the care

Advantages

- ❒ Improves morale and reduces stress on parents; contributes to higher productivity
- ❒ Reduces the costs of absenteeism, recruiting, and retraining and raises retention rates of valued employees

Disadvantages

- ❒ Recruiting and retaining child care providers
- ❒ Lack of employers who provide non-standard care

Information Services

Resource and Referral (R&R) Services

Assists parents in locating child care providers. Employers may contract with a national or local agency to provide referral services to employees or establish an in-house service. The R&R system can stimulate indirectly the development of additional child care providers.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests (such as accessibility, availability, quality), as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ A capital expense is involved in purchasing computer hardware and software if the employer starts up a system

- ❒ Additional insurance coverage and a written disclaimer may be necessary
- ❒ A consultant may be helpful

Advantages

- ❒ Costs to the company can be relatively low, particularly if it uses a system that is already in operation
- ❒ Direct company involvement is limited
- ❒ Can address a wide range of employee child care needs

Disadvantages

- ❒ Child care database files must be updated continually to ensure that the information is accurate
- ❒ Because services do not offer direct financial assistance, they may not be able to address the employee's child care problems

Educational Services

Employers provide parent seminars, child care fairs and information through brochures or libraries at the workplace. These activities are often the basis for developing other child care services. Educational services can be developed in-house or contracted out.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests, as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Whether employees are all in one location and can be relieved from their duties in large enough groups to make this option worthwhile
- ❒ There may be expenses related to time off for employees to attend scheduled events

Advantages

- ❒ A low-cost option for employers
- ❒ Easily adaptable to parent and company concerns
- ❒ Can support other company employee assistance programs, further demonstrating company's sensitivity to employee needs
- ❒ Promotes collective problem solving, reduces stress, and improves employee morale and performance
- ❒ Can provide company with information on other child care services that would benefit employees

Disadvantages

- ❒ Since this is not a direct child care service, it may not address the most critical concerns of parents
- ❒ Utilization may not be widespread

Alternative Work Schedules

Alternative work schedules help assist employees balance their family and work needs. Numerous businesses and organizations have developed various approaches such as the following:

Flexiplace/Telecommuting

Workers perform duties at home or at satellite worksites and are usually connected to their offices through a computer and/or telephone. In our rapidly changing economy, technology is making it possible for an increasing number of information-based jobs to be performed away from the office.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests, as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Need to adhere to labor laws and regulations on the protection of workers' rights
- ❒ Effect on conventional advancement opportunities

Advantages

- ❒ Provides larger recruitment pool, including individuals with disabilities, older workers, and working mothers
- ❒ Can increase productivity by allowing employees to schedule their work at preferred times and with fewer interruptions
- ❒ Reduces office space costs
- ❒ Allows for a flexible workday and permits access to the computer at off-peak times

Disadvantages

- ❒ Traditional supervisory methods are not appropriate; measuring a worker's performance can be more difficult
- ❒ Initial expenses may be high due to the acquisition of the electronic equipment needed
- ❒ Rigorous planning must be done to preserve the employment rights of telecommuters (job security and advancement, pension rights, other benefits)
- ❒ Possible resentment by those who feel they must cover for at-home workers or those whose jobs do not permit such arrangements
- ❒ Can lead to disputes over actual hours worked for compensation purposes; and
- ❒ Increase employer's difficulty in controlling overtime expense

Part-time Employment

May refer to portions of days, weeks, months, or years worked by temporary or permanent employees, but is defined by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics as working less than 35 hours a week.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests, as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ May be beneficial to employers with a large percentage of parents in their work force
- ❒ Particularly advantageous in workplaces where business is not limited to an 8-hour day, 5-day week
- ❒ Feasibility of prorating benefits and whether career ladders can be established to provide for advancement

Advantages

- ❒ Employers have a larger pool from which to recruit
- ❒ Allows flexibility in matching the work force to the workload, especially during peak periods
- ❒ Can lower absenteeism/tardiness and increase productivity

Disadvantages

- ❒ May involve extra costs for the employer because of fixed labor costs per employee or provision of prorated benefits
- ❒ Managers may perceive part-timers as less committed
- ❒ Worker dissatisfaction and turnover may occur if few or no benefits or promotion opportunities are provided

Compressed Workweek

Any work schedule that enables a full-time employee to work the equivalent of a full week in less than 5 days, or the equivalent of two full weeks in less than 10 days.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests, as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ The most common forms of compressed schedules are "4-10" (a ten-hour, four-day week) and "5-4/9" (nine hour days for eight days of a biweekly period, eight hours on the ninth day and the tenth day off).

Advantages

- ❒ Can reduce absenteeism
- ❒ Permits increased services to customers, since business hours are extended at least 1 hour a day
- ❒ For firms using extensive computer operations, permits more economical use of equipment and on-line time

Disadvantages

- ❒ Management and supervision may become more difficult, since employees and supervisors may not work at the same time
- ❒ Longer workdays may induce worker fatigue
- ❒ Can increase employer's overtime liability

Job Sharing

Two (or more) workers share the duties of one full-time job, each working part time; or two or more workers with unrelated part-time assignments share the same budget line.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Job sharers may perform all elements of the job or divide the tasks, depending on the skills and expertise of each worker and the job requirements
- ❒ Some common "splits" are: sharing daily hours and alternating days or weeks (in a bi-weekly pay period)

Most employers split salary and holiday pay 50-50, as well as the accrual of vacation days, sick leave and other benefits. Some companies base vacation time on seniority and assume the full cost of health and dental coverage.

Advantages

- ❒ Makes part-time positions more available
- ❒ Makes available a wider range of skills and experiences at no additional cost
- ❒ Creates a flexible schedule for workers with family responsibilities; increases productivity and morale
- ❒ Allows for job continuity if one worker leaves

Disadvantages

- ❒ Splitting benefits may lead to inequities or increased administrative duties
- ❒ Overlap of assignments may complicate performance evaluation

Flexitime

A work schedule which allows employees to vary their arrival and/or departure times, as long as they work a prescribed number of hours a pay period and are present during a daily "core time."

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests, as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Flexitime variations provide for the:
  - pre-selection of a daily starting time with the option to change to a new time at specified intervals
  - option to modify the daily starting time as desired
  - option to vary the length of the workday as long as core hours are observed, or to vary the workweek as long as the required weekly or biweekly hours are met

Advantages

- ❒ Low-cost, popular benefit
- ❒ Reduces absenteeism and virtually eliminates tardiness; improves worker morale and increases productivity

Disadvantages

- ❒ Requires more careful planning of the workflow since employees will not be on the same schedule
- ❒ Requires careful coordination of office coverage

Flexible Leave Policies

Systems that allow accrued sick and annual leave to be combined for employees' use as they choose. Policies may also include paid or unpaid "personal leave time."

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Employees' needs/interests, as determined by a needs assessment
- ❒ Administrative and policy changes are necessary when a company changes from separate annual and sick leave policies to a combined approach
- ❒ Carefully planned changes to ensure that employees are not penalized in their leave accrual rates
- ❒ Marketing and publicity are essential for all employees to understand how the flexible leave policy works
- ❒ Clearly defined guidelines must be established for personal leave time

Advantages

- ❒ Can reduce sick leave abuse, enhance worker productivity, and improve job satisfaction
- ❒ Allows employees the flexibility to take time off for family concerns without jeopardizing their jobs
- ❒ Can be an effective recruitment and retention tool

Disadvantages

- ❒ May add to administrative costs when the system is first implemented

Flexible Benefits

Options by which employers provide the financial means to access child care on and off site.

Flexible Benefits Plans and Reimbursement Accounts

Flexible benefits plans, also known as cafeteria plans, allow employees to design individual benefit packages by choosing from among several types of benefits. The employer provides each worker with a certain number of "benefits credits," which may equal a fixed dollar amount for each worker or an amount that varies among workers according to earnings, length of service, size of family or other characteristics. The employee uses the credits to purchase the desired benefits. If the credits are insufficient to pay for the chosen benefits, the employee may have the option to fund the difference with pre-tax contributions.

Reimbursement accounts, also called flexible spending accounts, provide funds from which employees pay for expenses not covered by their regular benefits package. Reimbursement accounts are usually funded solely by employee pre-tax contributions, although some accounts may be partially funded by employers. Reimbursement accounts may be part of a flexible benefits plan or they may stand alone. Eligible employees often use money from these accounts to pay for dependent care expenses, generally child or elder care or care for disabled relatives.

Factors to Consider

- ❒ Flexible benefits plans and reimbursement accounts are arrangements governed by Internal Revenue Code section 125
- ❒ Nearly all employees participating in flexible benefits plans or reimbursement accounts are required to contribute to the cost of their benefits, or are allowed to contribute to obtain additional benefits
- ❒ These contributions usually take the form of a salary reduction arrangement, which results in lower income tax liabilities
- ❒ Careful planning and communication are key to the success of flexible benefits plans
- ❒ Employees must understand their options fully to make choices of greatest benefit to them and their families
- ❒ Both employers and employees must understand the tax consequences of the various options

Advantages

- ❒ Creates equity in benefits, while meeting a variety of employee needs
- ❒ Provides a flexible response to the needs of a diverse workforce
- ❒ Costs can be controlled or reduced
- ❒ Lower income tax liabilities for employees

Disadvantages

- ❒ Implementation/administrative cost may be high in a comprehensive cafeteria plan
- ❒ Need to keep current on government requirements for various benefits
- ❒ Requires monitoring of tax consequences of various options

IV. Resource Listing

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
WOMEN'S BUREAU RESOURCES

Region I: Boston
J.F.K. Federal Building
Government Center
Room E-270
Boston, MA 02203
Phone: (617)565-1988
1-800-518-3585
Fax: (617)565-1986
(Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)

Region II: New York
201 Varick Street
Room 601
New York, NY 10014-4811
Phone: (212)337-2389
Fax: (212)337-2394
(New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands)

Region III: Philadelphia
Gateway Building
Room 2450
3535 Market Street
Phildelphia, PA 19104
Phone: (215)596-1183
1-800-379-9042
Fax: (215)596-0753
(Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia)

Region IV: Atlanta
Atlanta Federal Center,
61 Forsyth Street, SW Suite 7T95
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: (404)562-2336
1-800-672-8356
Fax: (404)562-2413
(Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)

Region V: Chicago
230 S. Dearborn Street, Room 1022
Chicago, IL 60604
Phone: (312)353-6985
1-800-648-8183
Fax: (312)353-6986
(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)

Region VI: Dallas
Federal Building
525 Griffin Street, Suite 735
Dallas, TX 75202
Phone: (214)767-6985
1-888-887-6794
Fax: (214)767-5418
(Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)

Region VII: Kansas City
City Center Square Building
1100 Main Street, Suite 1230
Kansas City, MO 64105
Phone: (816)426-6108
1-800-252-4706
Fax: (816)426-6107
(Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)

Region VIII: Denver
1801 California Street, Suite 905
Denver, CO 80202-2614
Phone: (303)844-1286
1-800-299-0886
Fax: (303)844-1283
(Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming)

Region IX: San Francisco
71 Stevenson Street, Suite 927
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: (415)975-4750
1-877-923-6509
Fax: (415)975-4753
(Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada)

Region X: Seattle
1111 Third Avenue, Room 885
Seattle, WA 98101-3211
Phone: (206)553-1534
Fax: (206)553-5085
1-888-296-7011
(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)

Women's Bureau National Resource and Information Center (NRIC)
1-800-827-5335

Internet Address
http://www.dol.gov/dol/wb/

Women's Bureau National Office
200 Constitution Ave., NW, Room S3311
Washington, DC 20210

E-mail Address
wb-wwc@dol.gov

OTHER U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Labor,
Employment and Training Administration,
Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training
Frances Perkins Building, N4649
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210
Phone: (202)219-5921
http://www.doleta.gov/bat/

U.S. Department of Labor,
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Office of Compensation Levels and Trends
Branch of Survey Data Analysis
2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Suite 4175
Washington, DC 20212-0001
Phone: (202)606-6222
http://www.bls.gov/ebshome.htm

OTHER FEDERAL RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Commerce,
Bureau of the Census
Fertility and Family Statistics Branch
Washington, DC 20233
Phone: (301)457-2416
http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/childcare.html

U.S. Department of Education
21st Century Community Learning Centers
Washington, DC 20202-4725
1-800-USA-LEARN
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/21stCCLC/

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information Center
301 Maple Avenue West, Suite 602
Vienna, VA 22180
Phone: 1-800-616-2242
TTY: 1-800-516-2242
http://nccic.org http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/nccichome.html

U.S. Department of Treasury,
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20224
Phone: 1-800-829-3676
http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/bus_info/index.html

U.S. Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street, SW, Suite 7600
Washington, D.C. 20416
Phone: 1-800-8-ASK-SBA
http://www.sba.gov/intro.html